

Ministry Musts - Acts 16:1-5 - June 15th, 2008

- In the text we have before us, Luke, by the Holy Spirit, tells us what happens after Paul and Barnabas parted ways in Antioch.
- Paul takes Silas with him and is now on his second missionary journey. What he does next is nothing shy of remarkable.
- In what he does and where he goes, Paul shows by way of example, certain characteristics and quality traits one must have in ministry.

- For the purpose of placing a title on this teaching, I'll call them; "Ministry Musts."
- You may be inclined to think that this doesn't apply to you because you're not "in the ministry."
- I suggest to you that it does by virtue of the fact that we are living in the last days, and the world is waxing more evil by the day.

- Let me take it a step further, these character qualities must be resident in our Christian experience if we ever hope to survive and thrive.
- If we're to be the "Salt and Light" of the world, and we are, then we need to take heed to that which the Holy Spirit has for us in the text.
- I found three "ministry musts," that are demonstrated for us in the person of the Apostle Paul, and this young man named Timothy.

1. Fearlessness (Verses 1-2)

1 He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. 2 The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.

- v1 Paul goes from Derbe to, of all places, Lystra where a disciple named Timothy lived. He had a Jewish mom, and a Greek father.
v2 We're told that the brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy. Something about him made an impression on everyone.
- One has to wonder about who and how this Timothy was. As we'll see shortly, he made a profound impression on Paul himself.

- I suppose you could say Timothy was one of those guys you never find, they find you, and not by coincidence but by God's providence.
- Timothy and his mom may have come to Christ after witnessing Paul's stoning to death, then, going back into the city the next day.
- If Paul had been unwilling out of fear to return to Lystra after being stoned there, we wouldn't have ever known about Timothy.

- It's as if God knew that Timothy would need Paul, and Paul would need Timothy. They became very close until the end of Paul's life.
- Six times in six different epistles, Paul refers to Timothy as "my son in the faith," all because he fearlessly returned to the town of Lystra.
- It's interesting that Paul would take Timothy under his wing and father him in the faith, as it were, because he, by nature was fearful.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. KJV

2. Commitment (Verse 3)

3 Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

- v3 Paul wanted to take Timothy with him, so he circumcises him for the sake of the Jews in that area who knew his dad was Greek.
- At first glance, one could miss the commitment this would require from both Paul and especially Timothy for going through with it.
- Paul is committed to evangelizing the Jews, and Timothy is committed to the Lord and Paul to do what is necessary to accomplish this.

- Why is this necessary? Timothy's father is Greek, and his mother is a Jew, therefore Timothy would be considered to be a Jew.
- Isn't this duplicitous? Isn't Paul delivering this letter of liberty that doesn't require Gentile believers to be circumcised to be saved?
- Paul isn't compromising his theology; he's committed to the Jews because he always starts by ministering in the Jewish Synagogues.
- Paul doesn't want Timothy to be a stumbling block to the very people he seeks to win to Christ. He's committed in his ministry to them.

One commentator said it this way: "Paul had Timothy circumcised, not for the sake of his salvation (Paul would never do so) but so there would be less to hinder ministry among the Jews."

"By Jewish law Timothy was a Jew, because he was the son of Jewish mother, but because he was uncircumcised he was technically an apostate Jew. If Paul wished to maintain his links with the synagogue, he could not be seen to countenance apostasy."
F.F. Bruce

- Why then didn't Paul, in Galatians 2, allow the Judaizers to circumcise Titus?
- First, because Titus was a Gentile, not a Jew.
- Second, because circumcision isn't a requirement for salvation and it wouldn't have required a commitment for evangelization.
- Paul writes about this so as to explain in his first letter to the Corinthian church.

1 Corinthians 9:19-22 19 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. NIV

3. Obedience (Verses 4-5)

4 As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

- v4 They go town to town delivering the decision made by the apostles and elders at the Jerusalem counsel for them to obey.
v5 We're told that the churches they ministered to were strengthened in the faith and in addition to that they grew numerically, daily.
- Why? Because of their obedience to the message that had been delivered to them. Obedience results in strengthened faith and growth.